

Ozymandias  
by: Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveler from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast<sup>1</sup> and trunkless<sup>2</sup> legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered<sup>3</sup> visage<sup>4</sup> lies, whose frown<sup>5</sup>,  
And wrinkled<sup>6</sup> lip, and sneer<sup>7</sup> of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal<sup>8</sup> these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal<sup>9</sup> wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

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- <sup>1</sup> large; big
- <sup>2</sup> bodiless
- <sup>3</sup> broken
- <sup>4</sup> face
- <sup>5</sup> angry face expressions
- <sup>6</sup> has folds or lines
- <sup>7</sup> mocking
- <sup>8</sup> base
- <sup>9</sup> enormous

الترجمة : أوزيماندياس  
تلميح: (أوزيماندياس) هو إسم آخر ل (رمسيس العظيم – رمسيس الثاني) ،  
الفرعون من السلالة التاسعة عشرة في مصر القديمة.

لَقِيتُ رَحَالَةً قَادِمًا مِنْ بِلَادِ عَنَبِقَةَ  
قَالَ لِي: ثَمَّةُ سَاقَانِ حَجْرِيَّانِ عِمْلَقَتَانِ لَا جَذَعٌ فَوْقَهُمَا  
تَقْفَانِ فِي الصَّحْرَاءِ. وَفَرِيهُمَا وَجْهٌ مُهْتَمٌّ،  
نَصْفُهُ غَارِقٌ فِي الرَّمَالِ، تُذَلُّ نَظْرَتُهُ  
وَالْتَوَاءُ شَقِيهٌ وَتَعْبِيرُ السَّيْطَرَةِ الْبَارِدَةِ الْبَادِيَةِ عَلَيْهِ  
أَنَّ النَّحَاتِ أَجَادَ إِدْرَاكَ تِلْكَ الْمَشَاعِرِ  
الَّتِي مَا تَزَالُ بَاقِيَةً، مَطْبُوعَةٌ عَلَى هَذَا الْجَمَادِ،  
بَعْدَ الْبَيْدِ الَّتِي سَحَرَتْ مِنْهَا وَالْقَلْبِ الَّذِي رَعَاهَا.  
وَعَلَى الْقَاعَةِ تُظْهِرُ هَذِهِ الْكَلِمَاتُ:  
"إِسْمِي أَوْزِيمَانْدِيَّاسُ، مَلِكُ الْمُلُوكِ:  
أَنْظُرْ إِلَى مَنْجَزَاتِي، أَيُّهَا الْجِبَارِ، وَابْتَلِسْ!"  
وَلَا شَيْءَ بَاقٍ بِجَانِبِهِ. وَحَوْلَ خَرَابِ  
ذَلِكَ الْخَطَامِ الْهَائِلِ، عَارِيَةٌ وَبِلَا حُدُودٍ،  
تَمْتَدُّ الرَّمَالُ الْمُنْعَزَلَةُ وَالْمُسْتَوِيَّةُ عَلَى مَدِّ الْبَصَرِ.

## Essay

Ozymandias is a sonnet by the romantic poet Shelley, published in 1818. The speaker recalls having met a traveler from an old land (i.e. Egypt), who told him a story about the ruins of a statue in the desert of his native country. Two large legs of stone stand without a body, and near them a big broken stone head lies half sunk in the sand. The traveler told the speaker that sad expressions on the statue's face indicate that the sculptor understood well the feelings of the statue's person, a man who was a tyrant and so proud of himself. On the base of the statue appear the words: "My name is Ozymandias, king of kings". Then he addresses people who have power to look at his statue and his works, and they must despair, because all his power and works are nothing now: what only remained is his statue. His works have disappeared, his civilization is gone. Around the statue, nothing remains except large areas of desert and sand.

The central theme of "Ozymandias" is the mainly decline of all leaders, and of the empires they build, however mighty in their own time. The great king Ozymandias [an ancient name for Rameses the II] wanted to be remembered for the great architecture and other things that he brought to Egypt. Sadly, the sand, wind, and time brought all of it down to ruins and much of it became buried beneath the sand.

Shelley cleverly uses Nature and time to bring in the "Mighty" one. God is the only being that has been around since time and Nature began. He represents what "Ozymandias" could not achieve and that is immortality. "Ozymandias" did however leave a mark on the world but in time even that too will be overcome by the forces of Nature and time that is God.

As for form, Ozymandias is an unusual sonnet of a fourteen line poem in iambic pentameter. The sonnet is structured as an octave (8 lines) and a sestet (6 lines). The octave often proposes a problem or concern that the sestet resolves. The ninth line – the first line of the sestet – marks a shift in the direction of the poem and is frequently called the "turn" or the "volta". While the rhyme scheme of the octave is ABBA ABBA, the rhyme scheme of the sestet is more flexible; two of the most common are CDCDCD and CDECDE.

As for figures of speech, the entire poem is a metaphor for the foolishness of a man who thinks that anyone can control time. Ozymandias was proud of his achievements, which now are nothing and disappeared in the sand and gone with the wind.

The poem has a couple of lines of alliteration:

Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,  
The lone and level sands stretch far away

which emphasize the loneliness and barren ruins out in the middle of nowhere.

We can also get imagery in lines four and five "Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,/ And wrinkled lip sneer of cold command". The reader can visualize the mean and evil look that the diction describes on the sculpted head of the statue. Ozymandias thought that by building statues and his empire that he would be the king forever. Obviously, that wasn't the case.

Shelley also uses symbolism. The traveler describes what is left of Ozymandias' empire as "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone...a shattered visage lies." Shelley uses the fallen statue to symbolize his fallen empire. Shelley also uses this setting of a desert and sand as a symbol. A desert is a land with no life anywhere. Ozymandias once had a successful empire and when his empire fell it turned into a barren desert. Overtime, what was once a huge empire is now miles of sand.

The tone of the poem is despair and irony on Ozymandias and his power. The message of the poem of "Ozymandias" is that man is insignificant and his efforts are vain when compared to the forces of time and nature.

These lines are taken from Ozymandias written by Percy Bysshe Shelley. The central theme of Ozymandias is the main decline of all leaders, and of the empires they build, however mighty in their own time. The tone of this poem is despair and irony on Ozymandias and his power. The message of the poem of Ozymandias is that man is insignificant and his efforts are vain when compared to the forces of time and nature.

1<sup>st</sup> stanza:

Shelley's poem describes the remains of Ozymandias' or Ramses' II Empire. The poem begins with the author recalling a time when he met a traveler from an "antique" land. Antique is a symbol for the ancient land of Egypt. In the line, "two vast and trunkless legs of stone stand in the desert" an enjambment is used. The poet here used an Imagery to paint a picture of the remnants of Ramses' II Egyptian empire. "Two trunkless legs of stone" are the only remains of a stone statue modeled after Ramses that was once 57ft tall. There is no longer a body or a torso, only two legs standing on a pedestal. Next to the trunkless legs, half sunk into the sand and shattered, is what used to be the statue's face. The face is described to have a "frown and wrinkled lip and a "sneer of cold command". These descriptions are symbols of Ramses' II personality. From the frown and sneer on his face, readers can conclude that he was an angry and fierce ruler.

2<sup>nd</sup> Stanza:

Through the inversion of the normal word order, Shelley tells readers that the sculptor was able to capture Ramses II personality and who he truly was through the statue's facial expressions. Shelley uses the word mock as a pun. In this case, mock is meant to mean both created and ridiculed. In the phrase, "the heart that fed" the heart symbolizes Ramses' II emotions and passions and fed is used as a metaphor, because the heart did not literally feed the emotions and passions to the statue. Shelley then goes on to describe what is engraved on the pedestal. When broken down the Greek name Ozymandias has an interesting meaning. The root Ozy means air and the root Mandias means to rule. So, Ozymandias literally means "ruler of air". This is ironic because there is truly nothing left of Ozymandias' empire but air. This name mocks Ramses II and ridicules his rule and works. King of Kings is an allusion to Jesus and symbolizes how important Ramses II thought himself to be. Through the engraving, Ramses II dared someone to challenge him and his works. However, whoever dared to challenge him would end up defeated and hopeless.

3<sup>rd</sup> Stanza:

Shelley uses another enjambment. However, the true irony of the whole situation is that nothing remains. All that is left of Ramses supposed great empire is a decaying and shattered statue. The engraving on the pedestal no longer applies, because his works are vanished and destroyed, he is no longer the "King of Kings". The last line really captures the irony of the sonnet. The once large empire is now just an empty desert, with nothing more than sand for miles and miles. Apart from the destroyed statue there is no other sign that in this desert, there was once a huge and powerful empire.